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BRIEFER ARTICLES

LINNAEUS[1]

MAY 23, 1707—JANUARY 10, 1778

(WITH TWO PORTRAITS)

The history of scientific progress has been marked by a few epochs introduced by new and revolutionary ideas. After a long period of almost no advancement, science has suddenly been carried forward in a most remarkable way. Such epochs have been few, and few are the men who have continued to be held in highest esteem with the steady progress of modern science. Among them was one who rose from humble descent to become the leading naturalist of the eighteenth century, and whose name is still among those most revered wherever natural science is taught or cultivated—LINNAEUS. Now that the day is at hand when his two-hundredth anniversary is to be observed throughout the scientific world, a brief sketch of his life and work is appropriate.

Between Lindshult and Jonsboda, in Sweden, there stood formerly an old and very large linden tree from which two brothers, the sons of a peasant, INGEMAR SVENSSON, adopted the surname TILIANDER; from this same tree their sister's son, NILS INGEMARSSON, took the name LINNAEUS. NILS INGEMARSSON was a minister, and his first living was in Raashult, the parish of Stenbrohult in Smaaland. He married CHRISTINA BRODERSONIA, and their first-born child was a boy who was christened CARL LINNAEUS. From his early childhood this boy showed an unmistakable love for flowers. His father was quite interested in botany and took pride in making the little garden of the parsonage one of the richest in flowers and rare shrubs. At the age of about four years CARL accompanied his father to a meeting; it was a fine summer day, and his father gathered several plants which he demonstrated before the guests, showing the peculiar roots of some orchids, Succisa, Tormentilla, and others. This little lecture in botany made such an impression upon the boy that he afterward never gave his father any peace, but repeatedly asked for more information and never tired of learning the names of all the plants he could collect. This incident was the first revelation of his genius;

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[1] The 200th anniversary of the birth of LINNAEUS is to be celebrated in many places during May, and the BOTANICAL GAZETTE wishes to share in honoring the memory of so notable a botanist. At its request this sketch has been prepared by Mr. THEO. HOLM, whose selection for the task is justified by his high esteem of the man and intimate knowledge of his life and work.—EDS.

and although he was "doomed to become a minister" while still in the cradle, he always remained faithful to his first impulse to become a student of nature.

As he grew older, this first impulse drove him farther and farther; he commenced to collect plants and insects, and in school he was soon dubbed "the little botanist." Some of his teachers, LANNERUS and ROTHMAN, took a special interest in him, and it was at the urgent request of ROTHMAN that his father abandoned the idea of having his son educated for a minister. LINNAEUS was then sent to Lund to study medicine, and there he had the good fortune to meet the famous STOBAEUS, who soon discovered his talent and aided him in every way to prosecute his studies. He showed him the large collections in the museum, which at that time was quite rich in minerals, shells, birds, and dried plants. Young LINNAEUS took a great interest in these collections and especially in the herbarium, and he very soon began to study the local flora, collecting and drying plants and mounting them.

From Lund he went to Upsala, where he knew he would find a larger library, a botanical garden, and more than all he would have an opportunity to attend the lectures of ROBERG and RUDBECK. On his arrival in Upsala (1728), he met CELSIUS, who treated him with the same fatherly benevolence as STOBAEUS. CELSIUS introduced LINNAEUS to RUDBECK, jr., an acquaintance who became of great importance to him. RUDBECK had himself visited Torneaa, Lapmark, and brought home extensive collections of plants, all of which were lost, however, by the great fire of Upsala (1707). While staying in the house of RUDBECK, LINNAEUS often listened to his narratives about this journey, and he soon felt a vivid desire to see that country and study its fauna and flora. Lapmark was at that time a *terra incognita*, and it was not so strange that the Royal Swedish Society accepted the proposition of CELSIUS and RUDBECK to furnish LINNAEUS with the necessary funds for making a journey to that country to make new collections.

LINNAEUS left for Lapmark in the month of May 1732, and, having made numerous excursions throughout the country, he returned to Upsala in the late fall of the same year. To LINNAEUS the journey became of the greatest importance. The arctic-alpine vegetation that prevails there left a deep impression upon him; his views became broadened; and he acquired great experience in field observation, not only in distinguishing species, but also in the geographic distribution of plants and animals. The results of this journey as they appeared in his *Flora Lapponica* laid the foundation of his fame. In the following year LINNAEUS visited the Swedish province

Dalarne, at the request of Baron Reuterholm, who wished him to explore that country as he had explored Lapmark.

While thus Linnaeus had devoted much of his time to the prosecution of his studies in natural history—botany, zoology, and mineralogy—he managed, nevertheless, to finish his course in medicine. It became clear to him, however, that his prospects as a physician in Sweden were not very promising unless he took the degree of Doctor medicinae. It was then that his friend Johan Browallius persuaded him to take this step, while his father-in-law, Dr. Johan Moraeus, offered to pay his expenses. He selected the University of Harderwijk, a small town in Gelderland, Holland, which at that time was frequently visited by Swedish physicians. In the early spring of 1735 Linnaeus left Sweden and arrived in Amsterdam June 2; thence he proceeded to Harderwijk, and having passed the preliminary examination he presented as his dissertation "Hypothesis nova de febrium intermittentium causa." Having proved his knowledge of medicine, Linnaeus received the "diploma, golden ring, and silk-hat" June 23, 1735.

Linnaeus in Lapland costume; from an oil painting by Hoffman in Amsterdam, 1737.

From Harderwijk Linnaeus went to Amsterdam, where he visited Burman, and thence he went to Leyden. His meeting with Gronovius, Boerhave, and Clifford of Hartecamp secured him the unusual opportunity of obtaining an excellent position as naturalist, and also the opportunity of seeing the most famous museums and botanical gardens in Europe. It was at the suggestion and expense of Clifford that Linnaeus visited England and France, and so great was his admiration for Linnaeus that he tried to persuade him to make Holland his home, but he returned to Sweden in May 1738.

It is really remarkable to note the good fortune that followed Linnaeus wherever he went, in meeting congenial friends and in gaining their confidence and admiration. His strong personality and his enthusiasm for natural science impressed everyone with whom he came in contact. His work in Holland resulted not only in the development of the large collections at Hartecamp, but also in the publication of some of his greatest works. Twelve important works were published during the two and a half years spent in Holland among which were the following: *Systema naturae*, *Musa Cliffortiana*, *Bibliotheca botanica*, *Fundamenta botanica*, *Flora Lapponica*, *Critica botanica*, *Hortus Cliffortianus*, *Genera plantarum*, and *Classes plantarum*.

On his return to Sweden, LINNAEUS was appointed surgeon of the admiralty and Regius Botanicus, and a few years afterward he was made Professor ordinarius at the University of Upsala (1741), and became the founder of the Museum Academicum. As a teacher, LINNAEUS showed an indefatigable interest in his pupils; by lectures and excursions in the field he taught them how to study nature, and it was under his patronage that several young men were sent to foreign countries to make collections. In this way, and also through his numerous friends among foreign botanists, LINNAEUS succeeded in accumulating an enormous mass of material for the completion of his work.

His aim to make natural science popular was crowned with success. It is difficult to find a whole series of publications by one man, in which the materials of natural science are brought together and presented so intelligibly as in the works of LINNAEUS. The simplicity that characterized his life was also expressed in his scientific methods. His ability to describe species of animals and plants in a very few words was unexcelled. He was the first to establish a system by which all plants might be readily classified, and although purely artificial this system has proved to be very useful, and is to some extent really a part of what we call now the natural system; and the terminology which he proposed is the one that is followed today.

The credit for having introduced binomial nomenclature as a "general principle" also belongs to LINNAEUS. He was actually the founder of plant morphology and plant geography, which may be seen from the following dissertations: Prolepsis plantarum, Sponsalia plantarum, Gemmae arborum, and from the introductions to his *Flora Lapponica*, *Hortus Upsaliensis*, etc. He studied animals and plants as living organisms, as members of a great living world, and he outlined in a remarkably simple way the distinction that may be observed between species and varieties. His greatest talent consisted in his unique power to grasp nature as a whole and to classify; but to classify in the spirit of LINNAEUS is something more than is understood by classification in modern times. He was compelled to invent a terminology, and to establish rules for describing and naming species as well as genera; and even if the system which he established was purely artificial, he indicated by his "Ordines naturales" that a natural system is the supreme end of systematic work.

LINNAEUS at the age of 67; from a painting by Per Krafft.

To his last days he preserved the friendly and simple nature that had marked him from his youth. Very characteritsic of him was his susceptibility to impressions and his indomitable energy. During the long period of active life he always declined to enter into discussion with those who opposed him; and he was accustomed to say: "If I have erred, nothing will be gained; but if I am right, I shall be so as long as nature exists." He was a very religious man and a firm believer in the inevitable Nemesis.

He died January 10, 1778, and was buried in the old cathedral of Upsala. A beautiful monument was erected on his grave, and the brief inscription shows how much he was appreciated by his friends and pupils. It is as follows:

Carolo a Linné
botanicorum principi.
Amici et discipuli.
MDCCXCVIII.